

Cultural Resources, People, and Places of Aviation's Early Years

The centennial of flight on December 17, 2003, is not far over the horizon, and it is worthy of wide recognition. The Wright brothers' airplane was an extraordinary invention, ranking near the top of every roll of the 20th century's greatest achievements and milestones of the millennium. This thematic issue of *CRM* is only one effort by the National Park Service (NPS) to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' achievement. It also explores other contributions to American aviation before and after the first flight, primarily those associated with the first decades of U.S. aviation. A second thematic issue planned for publication in 2003 will focus on aviation properties and related cultural resource management issues from later decades.

Wilbur and Orville Wright, Kitty Hawk, and Cape Canaveral are familiar historic names and places in American aviation, but many more are also noteworthy. These thematic issues will focus on historic resources, places, people, and events with stories to tell that are not as familiar as those of 1903. Two articles by Tom Crouch, Senior Curator of Aeronautics at the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution and noted authority on the Wright brothers and the history of aviation, are a special component of this *CRM*. Crouch's article, "Flight in America, 1784–1919," provides an engaging historic context to introduce the theme of American aviation.

We first met at the 1997 annual meeting of NPS historians and soon discovered a mutual

interest in American aviation history and cultural resources. This led to development of a session by NPS historians for the 1998 National Aerospace Conference—The Meaning of Flight in the 20th Century—at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Discussions at the NPS historians meeting in 1998 inspired the idea for thematic *CRMs* in conjunction with the centennial of flight.

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The first hangar, 1903. Courtesy Graycraft Card Co., Danville, Virginia, and S.W. Worthington.



The World's First Hangar

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